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ABSTRACT

This paper applies principles of situational leadership theory to the management of student behavior problems. First, it summarizes situational leadership, noting the theory's premise that leaders must consider two important factors to gain acceptance and compliance in managing people--the maturity level of the individuals and the nature of the situation. The paper then explains the different uses of power (punishment, connection, reward, legitimating, personality, information, and expert), and differing management styles (telling, selling, participating, and delegating). The paper then briefly describes the following seven models of behavior management: (1) biophysical, (2) behavioral, (3) humanistic, (4) psychodynamic, (5) ecological, (6) psychoeducational, and (7) cognitive. The paper then goes on to describe the five stages of moral reasoning. The paper suggests that an understanding of the principles of situational leadership, the various models of behavior management, and the development of moral reasoning, can help teachers to adapt their leadership styles and wisely use their power bases to influence and assist students. (Contains 17 references.) (DB)

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Options for Managing Student Behavior: Adaptations for Individual Needs

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ABSTRACT

**Options for Managing Student Behavior:
Adaptations for Individual Needs**

Situational Leadership is an option for teachers to adapt strategies to meet the individual needs of students with behavioral disorders. The methodologies of Situational Leadership can facilitate the implementation of various discipline strategies. Strategies from discipline models can be used in conjunction with Situational Leadership concepts.

Options for Managing Student Behavior:

Adaptations for Individual Needs

Situational Leadership was developed by Hersey and Blanchard (1977) and adopted by managers in various fields. Teachers are leaders and managers of precious resources, our children. We have adapted the concepts of Situational Leadership to assist teacher to become effective lead-managers who can, not only maintain discipline, but also guide their students in developing self-discipline.

According to Situational Leadership there is no one best way to influence people. When managing people leaders consider two important factors to gain acceptance and compliance. The first factor to be considered is the maturity level of the individuals; the level of maturity is defined as the willingness and the ability of group to follow the wishes of the leader. The second factor of importance is the nature of the situation.

Situational Leadership describes seven uses of power which a leader may apply. These are: Punishment Power, which involves punishment; Connection Power, which involves a connection with another power which can bring about obedience; Reward Power, which involves the ability to give desired rewards; Legitimate Power, involves being in the position of adult vs. child; Personality Power, involves gaining obedience because of the teacher's personal traits; Information Power, influences others because they need

information or want to be "in" on things, and Expert Power appreciates the teacher's skill and knowledge, attributes which are necessary for the students. Situational Leadership suggests that individuals at the lower end of the maturity scale more likely will respond to Punishment Power, Connection Power, and Reward Power. As individuals move from lower levels to higher levels, they will respond to Legitimate Power, Personality Power, Information Power, and Expert Power (Hersey and Blanchard, 1977).

In addition to recognizing level of maturity and level of power, Situational Leadership also considers how the situation influences maturity level. Circumstances may trigger immature behavior in mature children. Under stressful circumstances, teachers must have sensitivity and flexibility to recognize when a student needs a firm hand, or a kind ear and an understanding heart.

Situational Leadership describes four management styles: telling, selling, participating, and delegating. Teachers initially tell low maturity student what to do. As students grow in maturity, teachers sell their expectations through discussions and explanations. When students accept responsibility they are able to participate in decision making and lastly, teachers are able to delegate responsible tasks to those students who reach high maturity levels. This approach considers various models of behavior management such as, the Behavioral, Psychodynamic, Humanistic, Ecological, Psychoeducational and Cognitive Model. The situation and maturity levels of students determines the strategy.

Numerous teachers, unfortunately perseverate at a telling style of leadership. In order to move from a telling to a selling management style, teachers must lead students to higher levels of character development and moral reasoning. The principles of Situational Leadership (Hersey & Blanchard 1996) can facilitate the implementation of various discipline strategies. In addition, various models of behavior offer various strategies which can be used in consideration of the situation and maturity levels of students. Classroom discipline remains a major concern of the general public (Elam & Rose, 1995). In their pre-service training, teachers are traditionally introduced to various models of behavior management and to sequential stages of human development. An understanding of these knowledge bases is essential; however, application and knowing which strategies to use with children on different maturity levels is crucial.

Models of Behavior Management

A variety of conceptual models have been proposed to explain and understand the causes and management of human behavior. Presently there is a tendency to recognize that each model has worthy considerations and that appropriate techniques can be used from each of the approaches: the Biogenic, the Behavioral, the Humanistic, the Psychodynamic, the Psychoeducational, the Ecological and the Cognitive models.

1. The Biophysical Model

The Biophysical Model, also referred to as biogenic, biochemical and medical model, proposes that human behavior has a physiological origin and is controlled by inherited traits, physical characteristics, or illnesses. Biophysical interventions and preventions may include: drug therapy, prenatal and postnatal care, genetic counseling, megavitamin therapy, dietary control, physical exercises, and biofeedback.

Drug therapy has been helpful in treating neurological or biochemical conditions. Several types of drugs have been used to treat children with behavior disorders and other problems. These drugs include tranquilizers, sedatives, anti-depressants, anti-convulsant and neuro-chemical altering drugs. The most common medication teachers will encounter in schools are the stimulant drugs under the trade name of Ritalin, Dexedrine and Cylert. These drugs are commonly prescribed for children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders, and are believed to improve attention and activity level.

The elimination of artificial food colors, processed foods, and sugar as proposed by the Finegold Diet, although not supported by the research literature, is another biophysical approach suggested to control hyperactive behavior. Other dietary treatment approaches emphasize the remediation of low blood sugar, and allergy treatment methods (Bender, 1995). Prescribed physical

exercise is an additional recommendation for stress reduction and the release of energy. Biofeedback although not commonly used with school age children has been employed with individuals with hyperactivity problems. It is a technique for teaching individuals to control their own stress level and overt behavior by "feeding back" to them information regarding their physiological condition.

Parents and teachers play an important supportive role to medical personnel in the use of biophysical interventions. Medication and diet must be given and monitored carefully and teacher reports to parents and consequently to physicians are vital to prescribing and monitoring the most effective medication and the correct dosage.

2. Behavioral Model

The Behavioral Approach assumes that behavior is learned through reinforcement or punishment. People behave the way they do because their behaviors are increased by positive or negative reinforcers, and decreased by punishment. Behavioral interventions are based on two main assumptions: (1) the target behavior must be observable and measurable and (2) the consequences which follow the behavior must be able to decrease or increase the behavior. They believe it is useless to discuss a child's "inner feelings" or make allowance for a child who comes from a dysfunctional home.

Behaviorist psychologists emphasize the Stimulus Response Reinforcement model (SRR), and consider reinforcement as the primary mechanism for modifying or changing behavior. Reinforcers

are either positive or negative, but they both increase behavior. There are behaviorists who prefer using reinforcers and avoid punishment. They believe that punishment such as spanking increases hostility and models violence. Other behaviorists endorse both negative and positive reinforcers and advocate physical punishment when necessary. The application of positive reinforcement can encourage a child to be compliant. On the other hand, a child who is constantly punished, learns to avoid the punisher. Children will not establish a close relationship with punitive adults. Negative reinforcers can be used to increase appropriate behaviors.

The Premack Principal or "Grandma's Law", emphasizes the "if"-"then" condition: "If you do your work, then you may go and play." Within this model are specific techniques which teachers can apply within their classroom. These include token economy systems, response cost, contingency contracting, level systems, shaping, chaining, fading, differential reinforcement, time-out, extinction, satiation, and overcorrection (Alberto & Troutman, 1990).

The principles on which this model is based were initially proposed by behavioral psychologists such as Thorndike, Pavlov, Watson, and Skinner. The task of educators is to arrange stimuli and consequences that will teach appropriate behaviors. The behavioral model emphasizes precise definition and reliable measurement of observed behavior. Interventions to modify or change behavior must be carefully controlled and establish a cause-effect

relationship. Teachers using behavioral strategies must keep a careful record of the target behavior before and after the implementation of an intervention to determine its subsequent effect on the behavior. Most classroom teachers use behavioral techniques without tending to the precise technical requirements or record keeping. Ignoring inappropriate behaviors, reinforcing appropriate behaviors and enforcing consequences for rules violation often prove to be effective, and inexpensive.

3. The Humanistic Model

The goal of education, according to the Humanistic Model, is to develop the potential of every human person and to help them achieve self-fulfillment. The Humanistic Model values differences among individuals and suggests that students will realize their abilities when adults accept them and guide them towards self-actualization. To help students develop their strengths, teachers must demonstrate their own creativity and uniqueness. They must provide a democratic and open climate in which children are free to express themselves.

This model draws from the humanistic psychology of Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. Gordon (1974) recommends an updated version of Rogers techniques which includes a combination of environmental manipulation, active listening, communication through "I" messages, and awareness of problem ownership. He explains that "you" message have a put-down effect, whereas "I" messages deal with the behavior

rather than with attacks on the person. He suggests that when a child owns a problem, the teacher should use active listening; however when the teacher owns the problem, an "I" message rather than a "you " message be used. Such as: "Tom when I get interrupted, I have to start my explanation of the lesson over again, and I become very annoyed." Not, "You are so rude, you are always interrupting." In this example, the teacher owns the problem because it is interfering with the teaching. On the other hand, if a student tears up his math test and says "This is too hard" then, the student owns the problem. In this case, the teacher can use active listening to find out the cause and offer assistance. When listening actively, the teacher should listen to the feelings as well as to the words and avoid using put-downs, sermonizing, sarcasm and other negative communication blocks. Active listening involves door-openers to encourage the flow of conversation, such as "I see what you mean" or "I hear you say that...".

4. The Psychodynamic Model

The Psychodynamic Model also referred to as the Psychoanalytic Model, views the cause of human behavior as within the individual. The roots of this model originated in the theory of Sigmund Freud (Freud, 1965). It focuses on the balance between the main parts of an individual's personality: the id, instinctual selfish needs; the superego, a controlling force over these selfish needs and the ego, a referee balancing control and selfishness.

Misbehavior is believed to be caused by too much restriction or too much gratification at certain stages of a child's development. Followers of this model propose that when parents and teachers are overly strict, children may displace their anger by being aggressive to school mates or to younger brothers or sisters. These children may develop a negative self-concept and either grow up to be loners or nonconformists. They may become aggressive and rebellious or passive and indecisive. They are not able to get along with people and they resist any form of authority. Two fundamental ways in which parents and teachers can help the child according to the Psychodynamic model is: first, by accepting the child's behaviors and feelings; and second, by providing the child with opportunities for expression of feelings and impulses.

Professional treatment involves lengthy, intensive counseling to uncover and resolve hidden conflicts. Educational interventions stress the importance of an accepting and tolerant teacher. The teacher can assist in uncovering hidden conflicts by providing an atmosphere in which the child can express feelings and concerns. Strategies based on the Psychodynamic model include life-space interviews, classroom conferences, expressive media (art, music, creative dance, physical activities), transactional analysis, bibliotherapy, pet therapy, free play, puppetry, role playing, and psychodrama. Teachers must be trained in implementing these techniques and supported by counselors, school psychologists, or school social workers.

5. The Ecological Model

The Ecological approach assumes that people are inseparable parts of their social environment. This model was defined in the 1960's by Nicholas Hobbs and William Rhodes . They proposed that context affects behavior, and that children will misbehave and stop being productive when they are placed in losing situations. On the other hand, children will learn easily and feel confident when the situation is motivating and rewarding. A child's ecology is complex with interactions happening between and within systems (Hobbs, 1975). Children who are constantly punished at home and in school will eventually succumb to their environment and turn either inward, in quiet desperation, or outward, in hostility and aggression.

Advocates of this model believe that situations and other people interacting with the child are considered to be influencing the behavior. Problems arise when there is a lack of fit between the child and other individuals in the environment. Numerous variables interact in deciding whether a behavior is perceived as appropriate or inappropriate. This decision could depend on the values and expectations of the social norm or could be culturally relative. The saying "No man is an island", is a representation of the ecological view of society and suggests that there is a shared reaction between individuals and the people with whom they interact. Children will alter their behaviors when the adults in their surroundings change their behavior or expectations, or when the children are placed in a different environment. Teaching and

learning are interactive processes in which adults and children are influencing each others' behavior.

Ecological interventions are not designed to change or modify the child's behavior but rather to alter the interactions within or between settings that contribute to the problem. Interventions may be borrowed from any of the other theoretical models. However, the focus should not only be on the child, and the teacher must examine and consider all the surrounding factors.

6. The Psychoeducational Model

Originally the Psychoeducational Model was associated with the Psychodynamic Model and employed many its strategies; however, it eventually added its own dimension. According to Long, Morse and Newman (1976) the Psychoeducational Model proposes that the cognitive and affective processes are in continuous interaction and that children can be taught and assisted to follow the rules of their social environment. Children must be taught proactively when and how to use prosocial skills in order to cope with the demands of their environment. The adults responsible for the children's welfare must set limits and boundaries but must avoid coercion. In addition they must be caring and loving, but must avoid unbridled permissiveness.

The democratic strategies of William Glasser and Rudolph Dreikurs are two intervention used by advocates of this approach. Glasser's Reality Therapy (1965) is a process to teach irresponsible students to face reality, to function responsibly and

to fulfill personal needs. Glasser believes that adults should avoid being coercive (boss managers) and to empower children by leading them towards appropriate decision making (lead managers). (Glasser, 1990). Dreikurs (1987) classified the causes of misbehavior into four goals or purposes: (1) Attention-getting is the most common goal for most young children, but can also be observed in the behavior of older children and in many adults. Dreikurs proposes that adults pay attention to children's appropriate behaviors and ignore the misbehavior. If the behavior cannot be ignored a logical consequence for the misbehavior can be imposed. (2) Power is the second goal. Children and adults often engage in "power struggles". Power-seeking children feel important only when they can dominate others to get what they want. Dreikurs proposes that adults sidestep the struggle for power. (3) Revenge is the third goal. Children whose behaviors are motivated by revenge feel hurt and want to get even by hurting others. Dreikurs suggests that to help the revengeful child, parents and teachers should handle the child in a caring manner and teach methods to express hurt and hostility in an acceptable way. (4) The fourth goal is Helplessness or Feeling Inadequate: When children feel defeated, they give up hope of ever succeeding. In that situation, Driekurs suggests that parents and teachers refrain from criticism and stress the children's strengths and accomplishments. They can teach their children to think positively and to help them build confidence by engaging them in successful experiences.

Other psychoeducational interventions consist of similar strategies used in the Psychodynamic Model. Journaling is utilized to raise student's reflection and awareness. Bibliotherapy is an indirect intervention that uses literature for therapeutic purposes. The story must be carefully selected and the readers must identify themselves in the story. As they become emotionally involved in the story, they arrive at a greater understanding of themselves and their problems (Halsted, 1988). Teaching social skills and conflict resolution are psychoeducational strategies taught in many schools.

7. The Cognitive Model

The Cognitive Model is also referred to as the Social Learning Model. The lead proponents of this model are Bandura (1977), Meichenbaum (1979) and Mischel (1976). Followers of the Cognitive Model believe that human behavior is the result of a continuous and reciprocal interaction between a person's environmental and cognitive, and affective influences. Several strategies from the Behavioral Model and the Ecological Model are used in the Cognitive Model approach. However, this approach differs from the Behavioral Model in that affective variables such as feelings and perceptions are taken into consideration. Unlike the beliefs of the Ecological Model, persons are not powerless objects controlled by the environment, nor are they free agents. Both people and the environment are reciprocal determinants of each other. A person's thoughts and feelings may impact the behavior; however, these are

not independent of environmental occurrences and past experiences.

Educational interventions include teaching children self-discipline. Children can be guided to develop an awareness of their actions through the use of self-management strategies. These include self-recording, self-regulation, self-control and self-praise. Children can be taught to be reflective rather than impulsive and learn to internalize and generalize prosocial behaviors. Teachers can model thinking aloud (verbal mediation) and problem solving in a rational manner. At first children are allowed to think overtly and are gradually led to think covertly. A thinking strategy involves an analysis of the problem, defining the consequences of an impulsive response to the problem, planning a solution, implementing the plan and an evaluation of the outcome. Self-reward is encouraged when success is achieved.

Developments in behavior management techniques have created paradigms which combine the various approaches to understanding and regulating behavior. Teachers who are effective student socializers utilize a variety of behavior strategies, while keeping in mind the situation and the maturity level of the students. To become lead managers rather than boss managers, teachers must use their power wisely and empower the students as they develop responsibility.

Situational Behavior Management

Kohlberg (1977) describes five stages of moral reasoning: (1) Punishment and Obedience Stage: At this stage individuals do not consider motive when deciding what is "good" and what is "bad". They behave to avoid punishment or to receive rewards. (2) Instrumental-Relativist or "You Scratch my Back and I'll Scratch Yours" Stage: Around the ages of nine to eleven, children begin to understand motive. At this stage the moral reasoning of children is self-centered and selfish. (3) The Interpersonal Concordance or Good-boy, Nice-girl Stage: When children approach adolescence, they begin to be concerned about the opinions of others. They reach a stage of conformity and are concerned as to what others will think of them. (4) Law and Order Stage: Reasoning now switches from being concerned with what others think, to a belief in rules and regulations to keep law and order in the environment. (5) Social Contract Legalistic Stage: A person at this stage reaches independence of thought and right actions are perceived in terms of individual rights, and (6) the Universal-Ethical Principles Stage: Democratic ideals are considered very important and what is right and wrong is considered to be a matter of personal values. Persons at this stage are tolerant, open minded, and respect other people's choices and ideals.

Traditionally, teacher training programs have provided the knowledge base needed in developing various behavior management strategies. However, beginning teachers usually succumb to the influence of the school district's philosophy on discipline. In

the United States, most schools follow a behavioral approach and many of them include coercive procedures; twenty-three states legally allow corporal punishment of students (Evans & Richardson, 1995). Teachers who consistently use punishment and reward are not helping students to internalize and generalize prosocial behaviors. Through the constant use of the three lower power bases (Punishment, Connection and Reward power) students are not provided with opportunities to develop their maturity. Initially, teachers may implement behavioral strategies to correct the inappropriate behaviors of immature students. They must, however, gradually use strategies from the other models of behavior management to guide their students in achieving higher levels of character development moral reasoning, and self-discipline.

Through an understanding of the principles of situational leadership, the various models of behavior management, and the development of moral reasoning, teachers can adapt their leadership styles and wisely use their power bases to influence and assist their students. As teachers consider the relationship between these three variables they may want to shift from reliance on power bases that induce compliance and concentrate on those power bases that convey influence. In addition, teachers can gain valuable insights of their own maturity levels in their choice of power bases. By addressing their own personal growth, they can also intervene in advancing their students' maturity level.

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